

Course Title: Film Studies: From Literature to Film
Course Code: FILM 321 / COMM 321
Credit Hours: 3

Location: Classroom 1, Main building
Instructor: George Crane or Alan Blum
Telephone: XXXXXXXXX
Email: geo.crane@gmail or alanblum609@gmail.com
Office Hour: by appointment
Office location: by appointment

Syllabus

Course Description:

This course is designed to alert students to the various ways in which works of literature (novel, short story, and play) are translated to the screen. Screenwriting strategies run the gamut. Students will consider primarily how the screenwriter has selected, edited, or changed the literary text; why such choices have been made; and the success or failure of such adaptations. Other elements will also be studied including, but not limited to, casting, acting, direction, editing, musical score, art direction, etc.

Course Details:

The course observes and analyzes the various screenwriting strategies, from attempts to render as faithful as possible a rendering of the literary work to the screen, to looser adaptations that play freely with the original text either by stressing particular thematic or character elements or by overhauling the original text entirely and thereby producing an almost wholly original work. Because of the amount of material, books to be read and films to be seen, and the depth of understanding sought as each is applied to the screen, one core film/text will be examined over a two-week session. Students are to read and then discuss the nature of the text in class, so as to be as familiar with it as possible, then view the film. Further discussion and analysis will follow a response paper and then the film will be viewed once again, in light of all insights gained. In addition to their historical, social and emotional significances, some core films and texts were selected to examine the adaptation of the literary to the cinematic place.

Course Objectives:

- Examining the differences between creative techniques available to the filmmaker and the writer.
- Critically analyzing the essential themes of a literary work and determining how and why the filmmaker altered or adhered to the original premise of the literary work.
- Helping students to develop better critical reading and viewing skills.
- Working with students to refine their critical writing skills and express their opinions.

- Exploring the diversity that can exist between two different creative approaches to the same theme.
- Demonstrating, and assisting students to appreciate and develop, a tolerance for ambiguity.

Learning Outcomes:

In this course students will:

- Be able to identify the difference between the creative techniques available to the filmmaker and the writer.
- Be able to critically analyze the essential themes of a literary work and make an informed argument about how and why the film maker altered or adhered to the original premise of the literary work.
- Have demonstrably improved their critical reading and viewing skills.
- Have demonstrably refined their critical writing skills and ability/willingness to express their opinions.
- Be able to articulate an understanding of the diversity that can exist between two different creative approaches to the same theme.
- Be able to explain and defend the need for tolerating ambiguity in interpreting and analyzing literature, films, and adaptations of literature for film.

In-class literary texts and films (alternative films may be presented):

A Midsummer Night's Dream (Shakespeare), film by Peter Hall, dir.

Stage to Lordsburg (Ernest Haycox) & film *Stagecoach* by John Ford, dir.

The Sentinel (Arthur C. Clarke), film *2001: A Space Odyssey* by Stanley Kubrick, dir.

Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?" (Philip K. Dick), film *Blade Runner* by Ridley Scott, dir.

One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest (Ken Kesey), film by Milos Forman, dir.

A Streetcar Named Desire (Tennessee Williams), film by Elia Kazan, dir.

The Children of Men (P.D. James), film by Alfonso Cuarón

Outside of class additional films are chosen either under the assumption that students will in most cases already be familiar with the literary text, or else that the film adaptation in and of itself reflects obvious and interesting strategies to transpose a literary work to the screen:

The Great Gatsby (Jack Clayton, dir.)

Hamlet (Laurence Olivier version)

Tempest (Paul Mazursky, dir.)

Rope (Alfred Hitchcock, dir.)

Moby Dick (John Huston, dir.)

Rashomon (Akira Kurosawa, dir.)

The Unbearable Lightness of Being, novel by Milan Kundera

The Sheltering Sky (Paul Bowles), film *The Sheltering Sky* (Bernardo Bertolucci, dir.)

Reference Texts for selected readings:

Guy Austin, *Contemporary French Cinema*
John Belton (ed.), *Movies and Mass Culture*
Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen (eds.), *Film Theory and Criticism*
Pam Cook (ed.), *The Cinema Book*
Stephanie Harrison (ed.), *Adaptations: From Short Story to Big Screen*
Francois Truffaut, *Hitchcock*.
Linda Williams (ed.), *Viewing Positions: Ways of Seeing Film*

Evaluation

Students will be required to write one response paper of at least three (3) pages for each of the in-class films, and give at least one oral presentation on a selected topic during the term.

A final essay of 7-10 pages will deal with the topic of the course as a whole using at least three of the outside films as discussion points.

Students are graded based on their overall attention to, and participation in, all aspects of the course. Attendance is critical and all course films and books must be viewed and read.

Film response papers:	20 %
Oral presentation:	20%
Final essay:	40%
Class Participation, Critique and Attendance:	20%

Attendance and Make-up, Late Assignment, Grading Scale, Academic Integrity and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) policies

Students are required to abide by HISA's Academic policies first introduced and explained at the school and class orientation. The sheet is also attached here.